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Book Reviews

BABYLONIAN RELIGION

It was fitting that the ninth series of American Lectures on the History of Religion¹ should be given by the Secretary of the committee under whose auspices the various courses of lectures have been held. He is also the most eminent living exponent of the religion of the Babylonians and Assyrians. Jastrow's *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, published in 1898, was from the moment of its appearance the best extant book upon the subject. The revised and enlarged German edition of this, the first *Lieferung* of which appeared in 1902 and which is just nearing completion, marks a great advance upon the author's earlier work, though no one else had rivaled that.

The book before us is not an exhaustive treatise on the subject, but, as its title implies, a presentation of those aspects of the religion of the Mesopotamian Valley most likely to interest the general reader. The six lectures treat of the following topics: "Culture and Religion" (being a sketch of the culture and history of the Mesopotamian Valley), "The Pantheon," "Divination," "Astrology," "The Temples and Cults," and "Ethics and the Life after Death." The last four lectures are the most original and significant. Professor Jastrow has recently added much to our knowledge of Babylonian divination and astrology by his discoveries, and this popular presentation of the subject places the new material within the reach of all. Almost nothing had been written hitherto on the form of the temples and the details of the cult, nor had any serious attempt been made to estimate the ethics of these ancient peoples. These chapters are, accordingly, most welcome.

The introduction of illustrations is a happy innovation in the plan of the series, since it gives the reader a vivid impression of the culture and art of the country as well as of many of the religious conceptions.

The chronological appendix at the end of the book enables the

¹ *Aspects of Religious Belief and Practice in Babylonia and Assyria*. By MORRIS JASTROW, JR., PH.D., Professor of Semitic Languages in the University of Pennsylvania. With 54 Illustrations and a Map and Chronological Lists of the Rulers of Babylonia and Assyria. New York and London: Putnam, 1911. Pp. xxv+471. \$2.25.

reader easily to place the kings mentioned in the text, and also records Professor Jastrow's judgment upon many difficult chronological questions. Anterior to 1750 B.C. the data for an exact chronology do not exist. Dates are reached only by estimating various factors, and the judgments of scholars are bound to differ. Happily, however, the wide differences of former time are disappearing and scholars are reaching a consensus of opinion that our written records begin not far from 3000 B.C. Jastrow's earliest date for any known monarch of Babylonia is a little before 3050 B.C. If one allows that there is a possibility that these monarchs *may* have emerged three or four centuries earlier, no fault can be found with Jastrow's results.

Excellent as the work is, the present reviewer is bound sometimes to differ from the author. The effort on p. 116 to harmonize conflicting mythologies need not have been undertaken, had it been recognized that these mythologies arose in different centers. On p. 147 Professor Jastrow recognizes in explaining divination that certain practices represent early primitive unreflecting conceptions, while the astral part of the practices belong to a later and more speculative period. Had the same principle been recognized in the second chapter in explaining the pantheon, it would have been recognized that the primitive deities are chthonic, and far fewer astral origins would have been suggested there. The discussion of the god Tammuz on pp. 343 ff. would have been put somewhat differently had the author recalled, when writing, that the ancient Babylonian year began in the autumn.

I have noted the following typographical errors: on p. 42 "Assyrians" is spelled "Assarians"; on p. 295, l. 11, "Nabonnedos" should stand in place of "Naram-Sin," and on p. 411, l. 22, "are" should stand in the place of "one."

The work is supplied with a good index and should find a place in every Bible student's library.

GEORGE A. BARTON

BRYN MAWR COLLEGE
BRYN MAWR, PA.